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## USDA Rural Development Announces Funding for Two Regional Economic Development Efforts in Kansas

USDA Rural Development State Director Patty Clark announced that the Kansas Entrepreneurial Communities Initiative and the Southeast Kansas Project 17 Initiative received grants to help spur economic development that will create or save approximately 360 jobs in targeted regions of Kansas.

“The grants announced will help entrepreneurs in rural Kansas access the capital and technical assistance they need to grow or begin their businesses,” stated Clark. “In order to address the economic challenges in rural Kansas, we must work collaboratively and the two initiatives receiving grants think regionally to help improve economic conditions for rural Kansans.”

USDA Rural Development is providing assistance through the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program, which provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses. The RBEG program is a key element of the Agency’s economic development efforts across rural America.

The Kansas Entrepreneurial Communities Initiative (KECI), supported by Fort Hays State University through the Kansas Small Business Development Center, is a collaborative partnership of non-profit organizations that are focused on accelerating quality economic development in regions throughout the state. The initiative received a \$151,000 RBEG grant to help existing entrepreneurs expand by developing additional markets for selling their products and supporting aging entrepreneurs with transitioning their businesses to the next generation of entrepreneurs. Counties involved in the KECI initiative are: Allen, Anderson, Cheyenne (Bird City), Chautauqua, Dickinson, Elk, Greenwood, Labette, Linn, Marion (Hillsboro), Montgomery, Rawlins, Scott, Stafford, Thomas, and Wichita.

The Southeast Kansas Project 17 Initiative is receiving technical assistance from Kansas State University’s Advanced Manufacturing Institute, who will be researching niche opportunities for emerging manufacturing opportunities in southeast Kansas. The initiative received a \$95,000 RBEG grant to work with a coalition of regional, state and national partners to develop a strategy that leverages advanced manufacturing technologies, the region’s assets, idle facilities, technical workforce and educational institutions to coordinate a network-based approach to identify new opportunities for the region’s manufacturing sector. Project 17 is a regional initiative to help improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for southeast Kansans, and includes the following counties: Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Coffey, Crawford, Elk, Franklin, Greenwood, Labette, Linn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, and Woodson.

USDA, through its Rural Development mission area, has an active portfolio of more than \$172 billion in loans and loan guarantees. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America.